

Quality Accreditation for Quality Education

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Abstract

Educational accreditation is a strategic mechanism for ensuring and enhancing the quality of education within the Indonesian national education system, as mandated by Undang-Undang Nomor 20 Tahun 2003 and further regulated under Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset dan Teknologi Nomor 38 Tahun 2023. Despite its normative function as a continuous quality assurance instrument, accreditation in practice is often reduced to an administrative requirement aimed at obtaining formal recognition. This study examines the conceptual role of school accreditation in promoting sustainable quality improvement and strengthening public accountability. Using a descriptive-analytical approach based on an in-depth literature review of laws, ministerial regulations, accreditation instruments, and relevant scholarly publications, this article critically analyzes the gap between the intended objectives of accreditation and its actual implementation in schools. The findings indicate that accreditation should be repositioned as a self-regulation and quality mapping mechanism that supports long-term institutional development rather than short-term performance enhancement during assessment periods. This study contributes theoretically by reframing accreditation as an integral component of sustainable educational governance, conceptually by linking accreditation outcomes with quality mapping and stakeholder trust-building, and practically by providing a reflective framework for policymakers and school leaders to utilize accreditation results as strategic feedback for continuous improvement. Ultimately, accreditation must be understood as an ongoing and transformative process that supports the realization of high-quality education at local, regional, and national levels.

Keywords: Accreditation, Educational quality, Quality assurance, School accountability, National education standards

Introduction

Educational accreditation, or school accreditation, is defined in Law Number 20/2003 concerning the National Education System. It states that accreditation is the activity of assessing the feasibility of educational unit programs based on established criteria. Accreditation is carried out to determine the eligibility of educational programs and units at every level, type, and educational pathway (formal and non-formal). The accreditation process is carried out by the government and/or independent institutions, ensuring high public accountability (Republic of Indonesia, 2003). In its implementation, the accreditation process is based on the principle of transparency. More technically, the regulations for implementing accreditation are stipulated in specific ministerial frameworks (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2023). Furthermore, the detailed assessment instruments used to evaluate educational eligibility are governed by distinct executive decrees (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2024).

School accreditation aims to provide quality educational services and can be positioned as a self-regulation tool, enabling schools to identify and understand their strengths and weaknesses (Suryana, 2005). In this case, school accreditation is a means to make continuous efforts to improve the strengths of the school and improve its weaknesses. The school accreditation process must reach the point of being open and providing confidence to all stakeholders, both the school community (teachers, students and parents) and the general public, that the school has and will implement various school work programs with its resources seriously so that a quality education process can occur so that it can produce quality outputs.

Although educational accreditation in Indonesia has been widely discussed in regulatory frameworks enacted by the [Republic of Indonesia \(2003\)](#) and the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology \(2023\)](#), as well as in various empirical studies, most previous research has primarily focused on procedural compliance, administrative preparation, and the technical implementation of accreditation instruments. Existing studies tend to emphasize how schools prepare documents and fulfill assessment indicators rather than critically examining accreditation as a sustainable quality assurance mechanism.

Furthermore, prior research often highlights the short-term impact of accreditation, particularly the temporary increase in school productivity during the assessment period. Limited scholarly attention has been given to analyzing the discrepancy between the normative objectives of accreditation as a tool for continuous quality improvement and self-regulation and its practical implementation in schools. In many cases, accreditation is still perceived as a formal requirement for status recognition rather than as a strategic instrument for long-term institutional development ([Mueller, 2023](#); [Shal et al., 2024](#)).

Another gap lies in the conceptual positioning of accreditation within the broader framework of external quality assurance and public accountability. While accreditation is formally intended to function as a mechanism for quality mapping, policy planning, and equitable resource distribution, there is insufficient integrative analysis that connects accreditation outcomes with sustainable school improvement, governance reform, and stakeholder trust-building. Therefore, a more comprehensive conceptual analysis is needed to bridge the gap between regulatory expectations and practical realities, and to reposition accreditation as an ongoing, systemic, and transformative quality assurance process rather than a periodic administrative evaluation ([Alhajri et al., 2025](#); [Lytras & Şerban, 2025](#)).

This article aims to analyze the conceptual foundation of educational accreditation within the Indonesian national education system, examine the discrepancy between the ideal objectives of accreditation and its implementation in practice, reposition school accreditation as a strategic instrument for continuous quality improvement and self-regulation, explain the role of accreditation in strengthening accountability, transparency, and public trust in educational institutions, provide a conceptual synthesis that links accreditation results to sustainable educational planning and policy development at local, regional, and national levels.

This article offers several significant contributions. This study enriches the discourse on educational quality assurance by framing accreditation not merely as a compliance-based evaluation system, but as a self-regulatory and developmental mechanism. It contributes to the theoretical understanding of accreditation as an integral component of sustainable school improvement and governance reform. The article develops a conceptual synthesis that connects accreditation with quality mapping, stakeholder accountability, and continuous institutional development. It clarifies the multidimensional function of accreditation—knowledge, accountability, and coaching within the broader quality assurance ecosystem.

For school leaders and policymakers, this study provides a reflective framework to utilize accreditation results as strategic feedback for program planning, budgeting, and professional development. It encourages schools to shift from short-term, instrument-oriented preparation toward long-term quality culture development. This article supports policymakers in strengthening accreditation policies by emphasizing sustainability, post-accreditation follow-up mechanisms, and alignment with national education quality targets. It highlights the need to integrate accreditation outcomes into systematic coaching, supervision, and resource allocation strategies.

Methodology

This article is based on an in-depth review of various written sources relevant to the topic of educational accreditation. Data and study materials were obtained through the search and analysis of official documents, such as laws, ministerial regulations, and ministerial decrees governing the educational accreditation system and instruments in Indonesia. Furthermore, the author reviewed previous research published in national scientific journals to strengthen his arguments and enrich his theoretical perspective on the role of accreditation in ensuring and improving educational quality.

The analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical approach, describing the concept, function, and benefits of school accreditation, then critically analyzing these to explain the gap between the ideal goals of accreditation and actual practices. This approach enabled the author to develop a conceptual synthesis of accreditation as an instrument for quality mapping, public accountability, and the sustainable development and development of educational units.

Result And Discussion

In practice, school accreditation is often understood as a means of obtaining formal status and recognition, while its true meaning remains largely unknown and undecided ([Asopwan, 2018](#)). School productivity appears to increase when accreditation is underway, with all administrative tools prepared in accordance with existing instruments. However, once accreditation is completed and recognition is achieved, the productivity of school components returns to normal. In reality, accreditation is carried out to obtain an overview of school performance that can be used as a tool for coaching, developing, and improving the quality of education at that school.

The primary benefit of accreditation is to serve as a reference for quality improvement efforts and school development plans, as the results provide feedback for empowering and developing the performance of the school community ([Herianto et al., 2019](#)). For school principals, accreditation results are expected to serve as information for mapping indicators of school eligibility, the performance of the school community, and the principal's performance during their term of office. Principals also need accreditation results as input for program development and the school's revenue and expenditure budget. Meanwhile, for teachers, accreditation encourages them to continuously improve themselves and work hard to provide excellent service to students in order to maintain and improve school quality. Furthermore, teachers enjoy working at a school recognized for its quality.

Accreditation results in continuous self-improvement and hard work in providing the best service to students in order to maintain and improve school quality ([Iskamto et al., 2022](#)). Therefore, students will develop confidence that they are receiving a quality education and attending a quality school. Therefore, school accreditation serves the following functions:

1. Knowledge, namely providing information about the school's suitability based on various related elements that refer to national education standards.
2. Accountability, as a form of school accountability to the community.
3. Coaching and development, as a basis for schools, the community, and the government in efforts to develop and improve school quality.

Accreditation can serve as a benchmark for efforts to improve educational quality, ensure the implementation of the vision, mission, and objectives of school programs, and enhance the competitiveness

of education quality from the district/city to the national level (Febriyani & Warmansyah, 2021). Accreditation can facilitate the identification of assistance from the government, the community, or the private sector, whether in the form of training, coaching, or funding. For the government, accreditation serves as a form of assurance and control, as well as a manifestation of public accountability for the quality of educational program units in the Republic of Indonesia. Mapping of educational quality can be conducted to provide coaching programs to each educational unit, and the control function can be implemented so that stakeholders in the education sector work together to achieve quality educational services. For the public, accreditation of educational units represents a reflection of quality, as the primary customer of an educational institution (Bandiera et al., 2020; Širec & Rožman, 2025; Venegas-Mejía et al., 2022).

Accreditation is a crucial part of obtaining information about the actual conditions of an educational institution based on established minimum standards, leading to targeted educational planning that achieves the goal of quality national education (Saad & Asnidar, 2020). Accreditation is an effort to accelerate and encourage school growth and development, as well as motivating schools to compete to improve themselves in order to achieve established standards.

Accreditation plays a role in creating a set of quality standards for all educational institutions and programs, as well as maintaining stakeholder trust regarding the provision of education (Purba et al., 2022). The results of accreditation and school accountability will increase public trust. When an educational institution or agency is properly accredited, the public can draw conclusions about the overall quality of education delivery (Alkhateeb & Romanowski, 2021; Kumar et al., 2025; Mariano & Valenzuela, 2021).

Accreditation is a form of external quality assurance for educational units, the results of which benefit both the educational unit and its governing body, as the results provide an evaluation of the school's achievements (Suardipa & Pitriani, 2020). Quality in educational units means producing and providing the best, aiming to meet or even exceed established standards. Therefore, accreditation results, as input from external parties regarding the overall feasibility of educational programs, are beneficial for meeting national education standards and as a means of fostering, improving, developing, and mapping the quality of education within the educational unit, which ultimately influences the mapping of educational quality throughout the Republic of Indonesia. The meaning of accreditation is more than just an assessment of an educational unit. Accreditation can be interpreted as a realistic depiction of the current condition of an educational unit, so that a guidance and development plan can be designed, as well as a mapping of educational quality, from the educational unit, regionally, to nationally.

Conclusion

Accreditation is a strategic instrument for ensuring and improving educational quality. It serves more than just a form of formal assessment or recognition of educational institutions. Furthermore, accreditation serves as a means of mapping educational quality, providing a clear picture of the condition, performance, and level of achievement of national education standards within educational institutions. Through accreditation, schools can identify their strengths and weaknesses and thus design sustainable improvement and development efforts.

In practice, accreditation is often narrowly interpreted as an administrative activity to obtain a certain status, resulting in temporary and unsustainable improvements in school performance. However, accreditation

results should be used as constructive feedback for schools, principals, and teachers to improve the quality of educational services, school management, and student learning outcomes.

Furthermore, accreditation plays a crucial role in strengthening public accountability and public trust in the quality of education delivery. For the government, accreditation serves as a basis for quality control, policy formulation, and targeted guidance and mentoring of educational institutions. Thus, accreditation must be understood and implemented as a continuous process that is oriented towards improving the quality of education in a systematic, planned and sustainable manner, in order to support the realization of quality national education.

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